

D E B A T E

P R O P O S E D

IN THE TEMPLE PATRICK SOCIETY,

AND FULLY DISCUSSED BY THE MEMBERS,

W H E T H E R

WITCHES, WIZARDS, MAGICIANS, SORCERERS, &c.

HAD SUPERNATURAL POWERS,

And by Means of Intercourse with, or Assistance from
invisible supernatural Agents,

Had Knowledge of, and could Foretell future Events,

With Power over the Inhabitants of this WORLD,

Or to perform Actions beyond the Power of human Nature.

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P H I L A D E L P H I A :

Printed by W. Y O U N G, Bookseller and Stationer,
at the Corner of Chestnut and Second Streets,
For Mr. J. KNOX and Rev. BRYCE MILLER.

M, DCC, LXXXVIII.

24244.249*

Harvard College Library
George Lyman Pittredget Fund
February 26 1932

T H E
S U B S T A N C E O F T W O S P E E C H E S
C O N C E R N I N G
W I T C H C R A F T.

M r . P R E S I D E N T ,

THERE are many arguments that might be urged in support of the reality of witchcraft.

1. The first class of arguments, may be drawn from the prevailing opinion, and consent of all ages and nations ; an argument, fir, which has ever been urged, as weighty in support of the existence of the Supreme God and first cause of all things.

2. Another class of arguments are drawn from the possibility of the thing, and the manner in which infectious diseases are communicated from one object to another. We know that all animals have emittent and recipient parts, the breath and pores of the skin : It will be granted, then, that all animals emit effluvia ; and does it not follow, that within their expiratory and perspiratory sphere, all bodies, according to the disposition of their exhaling and reviving parts, must be affected in proportion to the quality of the effluvia. This theory enables us to account for the phenomenon of witchcraft in general, and that kind of it in particular which we call fascination.

3. Another class of arguments may be drawn from the testimony of all the antient naturalists, modern authors of great note and unquestionable veracity, as well as the testimony of our own senses and observation. Naturalists vouch, that the very stare of the opoblepa and basilisk kill other animals. A modern writer whose veracity has never been questioned, affirms, that “ he saw a mouse running

“ round a large snake, which stood looking earnestly at
 “ it, with its mouth open. The mouse made less and
 “ less circles about it crying all the while as if compelled
 “ thereto, at last with much seeming reluctance ran
 “ into the mouth of the gaping snake, and was immedi-
 “ ately swallowed.”

Who does not know that the eye of a setting dog confounds a partridge, and the stare of a dog will make a squirrel drop from a tree.—Such effects we call fascination, and may not the human eye emit noxious, effluvia, sufficient to kill human creatures.—How few of human kind have been exempt from or strangers to the baneful effects of the human eye. With what reluctance have we been compelled to obey an intreating eye? Have not looks disarmed us of our strongest resolutions, and awed us into submission, when threats and blows were without effect? Have we not found our souls swelling with indignation, and almost bursting the whole frame; for what? the glance of a disdainful eye.—What uneasy sensations do we feel from the stare of an angry eye?—Those who chuse it, may ask themselves, what they have felt from a lascivious eye. Ask sincere lovers, what arrows, what darts, what tortures, what deaths, have been thrown from, and inflicted by the eyes of a fair but cruel, a lovely but false, a charming but cold, a sweet but unconstant mistress. Now if the eyes of the younger part of the sex emit such penetrating effluvia, how much more baneful, must those juices be which are emitted from the eyes of old bilious persons, whose vicious habitude of body, irritates and corrupts the nervous juices, and gives them qualities more penetrating and malignant, especially when their minds are excited by provocation, to dart the effluvia, with impetus sufficient to produce the effect.—For this reason old women have not only been suspected, but in the nature of things do possess this faculty in the highest degree; and young women and children, have always been found most liable to be affected, because their fibres are more tender, their juices more unconnected, and their pores more open than those of mature persons of a firmer texture. An evil eye, then, or an eye capable of doing evil, would not be so much cal-

led in question, did we only understand the theory of infectious diseases by effluvia, or examine the powers of the human eye with due pains.—What vast room for observation and how greatly are we assisted in accounting for, the phenomena of witchcraft, when we consider the large fund of volatile matter to be distributed by the eye, consisting of its fine humors, thined by the passing rays; and the subtile juices or spirit of the next optic nerve, elaborated in, and so copiously supplied by the brain, thrown by the swiftness of a thought, capable of motions, vibrations and directions, so quick, so intense, and so varied, as cannot fail to have a wonderful effect wherever it strikes, proportioned to the qualities, subtilty and acrimony of the juices, the impetus of the eye, ~~and~~ the coarseness, delicacy, and susceptibility of the object affected.—Matter so subtile thrown from the eye of a provoked witch, may force its way through the solid cappillaments of the nerves, shaking and distended muscles, distorted limbs, distocated bones, and a vitiated habit of body are some of the dire effects of witchcraft.—Effects from which the human body is not secure, countenanced by philosophy, vouched by fatal experience, and the testimony of learned and good men in different ages.—But tell me, sir, if ever you or any gentleman present read the history of that century, or nation in which we do not find evidences of the faculty of witchcraft and of the crime itself, which we cannot overturn, without destroying the evidences on which our faith of other crimes and events depend.

But if history were silent, were there no instances of the crime of witchcraft, of the power of witches, of their intercourse with evil and invisible spirits, were we to deny the doctrine of the gradation of spirits, that there are intermediate, guardian, or evil spirits, that spirit can act on spirit, the oracles of infallible truth, establish the reality of the thing beyond the least possibility of doubt.

There, sir, we have undeniable instances of intercourse between heavenly and human, visible and invisible beings, not only the first pair, but the patriarchs, and Moses, as well as other good men holding intercourse with God and angels.—That evil spirits, dictated to false prop-

phets, had intercourse with and assisted witches and wizards.——That by the agency of an invisible spirit, an afs spoke.——This one instance of an afs speaking, we cannot, we will not question. Sir, we read only one instance, and it is but natural to infer, that if other asses have spoke since, they have done it in a different shape and dress. If they had impudence to put on big wigs, or black-gowns, or to crop their ears, and wear the one curl, still, sir, they would have been known; for whether they read or speak, so much gravity centering in their head, and shoulders, would keep their noses so much downward, to their papers, in reading if speaking, the attitude would be equally awkward. Let this be as it will, the influence of invisible and supernatural agents, upon and in concert with visible and material beings, is the doctrine of divine revelation.——(That spirits have taken possession of human creatures, is founded on the same authority, and evident from the miracles wrought by the divine Savior.) I might mention several plain passages in the sacred pages, where the powers ascribed to witches, wizards, magicians, forcerers, &c. and their crimes, are not only represented as real, but reprimanded and punished. “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live (1).” What, was a woman to be put to death, for a crime she neither had committed, or could commit.” “Neither shall ye use enchantments nor observe times: ——Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards to be defiled by them (2).” “A man also, or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or wizard shall surely be put to death (3).” “Then Pharoah also called the wise men and the forcerers; now the magicians did so also with their enchantments (4).”

After quoting these passages so plain and so much to the point, need I introduce the well known story of the witch of Endor, whose power in raising Samuel, with all the circumstances attending it, such as foretelling the fate not only of Saul’s army, but Saul’s own fate, and that of Jonathan, is a standing and incontestible proof of the reality and power of witchcraft——founded on evidences so strong and convincing, that all the stories, im-

(1) Exod. chap. 22. ver 18. (2) Lev. chap. 19. verses 26. 31. (3) chap. 20. ver. 27. (4) Exod. 7. ver 2.

postors, and delusions, propagated and supported by interested men, cannot demolish the faith of it.

They may weaken the credit due to some particular instances of it, but that there has been such a thing as witchcraft, is the united voice of revelation, tradition, experience, and observation; may we not therefore conclude with judge Blackstone in the words of his ingenious countryman, Spectator Num. 117. "That in general there has been such a thing as witchcraft, though we cannot give credit to any particular modern instance of it."

TO account for the faith, and opinions of mankind, respecting witchcraft, as streams they must be traced from their proper fountain; small in their rise, they widen as they flow, and the longer they run, contract qualities of a different nature; till swelling into a torrent, they have often overflow'd the reason of men, and involv'd their understandings in a labyrinth of error and delusion.

Among the many sources of deception, with respect to witchcraft, and the powers ascribed to witches, wizards, forcerers, diviners, &c. are the methods used in early ages, of qualifying men for the mysterious business of prophesying, and the women for oracles; these consisted chiefly in long fasting, severe watching, and years of painful discipline. Similar in some respects to those practis'd by the Bramins, preparatory to the acquirement of religious mysteries; and by the priests of Greenland, previous to their pretended journey to explore the sufferings, and employment, of souls in another state; or like the Pythones, who before giving answers to the Delphian oracle, by means of fasting, chewing laurel leaves, and a hideous noise from the hollow of the Tripod on which she stood, wrought herself into a kind of convulsive enthusiasm.—When we consider the effects which these, and such like methods have on body and mind, it is not very surprising that violent contortions during frequent paroxysms were mistaken for the influence of supernatural agents, and that the inexplicable nonsense uttered by the unhappy subjects of nervous irritability, was regarded by the votaries of mystery, as the solemn prediction of future events.

That the polytheism of the Gentiles, as well as the mythology and fables of the Greeks, which abounded with enchantresses, tended to inspire and spread similar notions of witchcraft, is evident: hence we find Jason taught by Medea to tame the brazen footed bulls, the dragons that guarded the golden fleece: Hecate by spells could melt the adamantine heart into love: Circe could detain Ulysses in her enchanted island, and convert his sailors into swine.—Similar powers, too are ascribed to anient as to modern witches, such as riding on the

clouds, producing tempests, and spreading diseases among men and brutes.

If we consult Roman poets and historians, Horace will vouch the powers of his Canidia; Virgil's shepherds are of opinion that charms can bring the moon from the sky, and that their lambs were subject to fascination. "Nescio" "quis oculus mihi fascinat Agnos." Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, and Japanese, boast of their soothsayers, Magicians, and Magi, ascribing to them the power of good, and evil, and consulting them about the destiny of their children; while other nations have been disposed to consult the women, and have in general agreed to call them witches, or dealers in futurity.—It is probable, however, that if the male nature had been as subject to nervous weakness; or spasmodic affections as the female, men would have been as much suspected as women, but women, partly owing to their manner of living, have a laxity of fibres, to which male bodies of a firmer texture are not so liable.

That the women were more suspected than the men, was likewise, a consequence of being considered in these barbarious ages, merely as instruments of animal pleasure; and therefore only regarded with esteem, while they had youth and beauty to recommend them; with these their brutal masters, (for husbands, we must not call them) deserted the fair sex. Abandoned to solitude, they were naturally led to exert their mental powers, of which nature or rather the author of nature has been so lavish to the sex in general, as well as ours, and their success in acquiring degrees of wisdom, penetration, and prudence so vastly superior to the young, giddy, inconsiderate herd of females around them, gave rise to a conjecture that the peculiar discernment acquired in their forlorn circumstances, was the effect of intercourse with supernatural agents. To a mind, however capable of calm reflexion or composed deliberation, the impudence of the devil, and his angels was surpassed by the ingratitude of our sex, who not only deserted the sweetest of earthly companions, but suffered the best of human beings to be degraded by the name of witch. Another cause of this suspicion, was the history of facts. In primitive times, intercourse be-

twixt heavenly and human beings was not uncommon. —Our first parents conversed with God. Angels proclaimed the destruction of Sodom : to Abraham the birth of a son. Jacob wrestled with an angel. A celestial being was seen in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego. Moses had frequent interviews with the Father of our spirits ; with some other instances of similar intercourse, that might be adduced. —What was real among the Jews, and to Israel in general, was imagined by other nations ! the gods, even Jove himself was supposed to cohabit with women, they became pregnant with heavenly seed and were delivered of Demigods.—The grape and its use was explained by Bacchus, the use of corn by Ceres. By admitting that good spirits conversed with, and communicated their influence to good men for good purposes, they were led to admit that bad spirits used their influence on wicked men for base ends ; hence the ancient faith, that lying spirits made false prophets, and assisted witches and wizards, to lead to destruction those who trusted in them.

We find however that the faith and opinion of men respecting witchcraft and its influences on other creatures varied according to the prevalence of ignorance and superstition in different ages and countries.—Hence we find in times of greater ignorance Britons, Germans, and almost all the northern nations, paying unlimited obedience to Druids, and Druidesses. The eastern nations revering every female who pretended to sorcery, and sustaining hysteric fits for the influence of good spirits. Women divining in the north, and men prophesying in the south. But what perhaps may give some present, a better idea of the witchcraft and divination of those times is the story of Thorbiorga, a noted witch or enchantress of Denmark, famed for her knowledge of futurity.—As I cannot suppose this story known to all present, or even the greater part of this audience, I must beg the patience of the chair, and of such gentlemen as may be acquainted with it, while I endeavor to relate the leading circumstances, in as few words as I can.

When the Danes were distress'd with a famine and

general sickness, it was resolv'd by some families of rank to apply to Thorbiorga to learn the issue of their calamities. The earl of Thorchill invited her to his house, and she was received with the utmost respect by a large assembly.—An elevated seat was prepared for her, covered with a cushion, stuffed with feathers, to which she was conducted by the earl himself.—She was dressed in a green gown, buttoned from top to toe.—s She wore on her head, a black lamb skin, lined with a white cat skin, a string of glass beads, about her neck, white cat skin gloves, with the fur inward, calf skin shoes with the hair on them, fastened with brass buttons a girdle about her waist and a bag of magical instruments at her side ; her limbs were feeble, and she supported herself on a long staff, adorned with brass knobs ; she was served with a pottage of goats milk, and a dish consisting of the hearts of several animals agreeable to her own desire. Soon after, the earl again humbly approached her, and asked what she thought of his house and family, and if she would deign to answer a few questions for the satisfaction of the assembly. Thorbiorga replied, she would satisfy them next morning. The company cheerfully waited the response, and next morning, after putting her instruments of divination in order, and the magical song Wardlokur, sung by her maid Godreda, which greatly ravished the company and likewise the prophets, who instantly cried out “ Now I know many “ things concerning this ~~t~~ mine, and sickness, which I “ did not know before.” This famine will be of short “ continuance and plenty will return with the next season “ that will be favorable, and the sickness also will shortly “ fly away.” So easily were men imposed on, in these days of ignorance, that this vague answer, was satisfactory to the only people of note and discernment in Denmark.

Notwithstanding the degrading idea, affixed by the Jews to those people who connived with evil spirits, other nations held them in esteem, till the christian scheme, by pointing out the impiety of searching into the secret will of God, exposed the absurdity, and convinced all who were at pains to examine its doctrines, that all pretenders to sorcery, divination, or powers superior to na-

ture were impostors.—How fluctuating the opinions of mankind ! How seldom do they hold the middle path ? Witches and wizards who had long commanded the veneration of nations, soon became, not only the objects of contempt, but were treated with the utmost severity. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, present us with scenes too shocking to be long looked at.—Priests enforcing the most wild opinions with fire, faggots, and threats of eternal vengeance ; kings inspired with pious rage, against supposed witchcraft and imaginary crimes, employing slaughtering armies, and drenching fields with human blood. Scenes horrid as they were, and amidst all the changes they produced, still the opinion prevailed that women were addicted to witchcraft. Poets and painters took the witch of Endor, for their original, and drew all their witches tottering under a load of years, with gloomy countenances, withered hands, sunk eyes, prying looks, and whatever the most fertile imagination could devise to finish the picture. Old women became the unhappy objects of public odium, and the infirmities and other incidents peculiar to advanced life, which ought to have procured them pity and protection, was considered as characteristic of witchcraft, their experience and superior discernment, were deemed the result of intercourse with spirits. Thus the poor wretches struggling with old age, for actions and events beyond the ken of the times, were either condemned to imprisonment, to flames, or exposed to the fury of a barbarous enthusiastic multitude. The flame of persecution so heated the imaginations of men, so general was the faith of witchcraft, that persons of almost every rank became suspected. Women of birth and fortune were condemned for crimes they could not commit. The most ridiculous story supported by the least shadow of evidence was sufficient.—A statesman who wanted to get rid of an opponent, had only to accuse.—Manual Comennes a Greek emperor, condemned an officer of rank for rendering men invisible.—Another was condemned for reading a book of Solomon's, supposed to conjure legions of devils.—The duchess of Gloucester, Mary Gurdermain, and a priest were condemned to various deaths, without either proof or possibility of its

consequences, on a mere supposition of having burnt a figure of Henry VI. in wax. The maid of Orleans, was condemned for superior courage, and maintaining that Heaven was on her side. An emaciated arm, or whatever the ignorance of the times, could not, or would not account for, was considered the effect of forcery.—The delusion spread far and wide, and gloomy bigots, to escape the punishment to which their intolerant principles exposed them in England, fled to America, and propagated the like opinions there. A minister's daughter falling into fits was supposed to be bewitched, an Indian maid was not only charged, but made to confess the crime. Every complaint had a similar cause, and all that beset the human body, was deemed the effect of witchcraft. Whoever were at variance with the afflicted, were accused, and the imputation became general. Women were stripped for magical teats ;—Stains on the human body were deemed the devils pinches, and condemned those on whom they there found. Confessions were extorted by tortures ; women own correspondence with infernal spirits, and that such cohabited with them. They were likewise pressed to confess that others were guilty, and commonly named such as first occurred to their memory. Gibbets appeared every where, and the phrenzy was almost universal. In towns or villages, even to the palace of the governor, terror and amazement appeared in every countenance. Magistrates were condemned for refusing to condemn others, every man trembled for his own situation, and wrought out his own salvation with fear and trembling, by ceasing to inform on others.—Reason began to resume its throne, reflexion gave birth to remorse, and shame, powerful shame, operated miraculously in stopping this dreadful scourge and cause of human woe.

The doctrine of possession however, was still maintained by the church of Rome, and unnatural contortions, as well as extraordinary force, observable in persons under spasmodic diseases, was asserted to be the agency of devils. It was of little consequence that physicians, discovered these symptoms to proceed from natural causes, the discovery, though evident from observation, met with the keenest opposition from the

Romish priests, who as they arrogated to themselves the power of casting out devils, bribed women to affirm they were possessed, and were instructed in the languages by evil spirits. Though dangerous to contend with the church in those days, a Physician of Sardinia had courage to attack the absurdity, and skill enough to detect the imposture. The story is shortly thus: A girl of Turin being troubled with convulsions, the Jesuits made use of her for the purpose of trick. They asserted she was possessed, and could not be cured by medicine. The exorcists were assembled, and the girl was instructed how to carry on the imposture. The people flocked from all parts to learn the issue of the trial. The doctor asserted, that, what they ascribed to the agency of devils, was the effect of natural causes, and supported his opinion by facts which had fallen under his observation in England and Holland. The Jesuits reprobated his theory, and offered to convince him by the testimony of his own senses. The doctor after waiting the round of prayers and preparations, begged leave to ask the patient a few questions, which the ecclesiastics granted on condition they were not to be unlawful questions. Commanding the devil to make answer, the doctor asked his name in English: The girl answered in Piedmontese, she did not understand the question. The Jesuits, who maintained the devil understood all languages, seemed not a little mortified, but endeavored to elude the consequences; by pretending that the doctor had put an unlawful question, but the doctor explained in Piedmontese the girl's own language, and could not be answered. A Chinese psalm book was next got, to confute the Jesuit's devil, which so offended his royal highness, that he threatened to make known all the transactions of the doctor's life, which the doctor insisted, if the devil did not, he would brand him and all his supporters, for knaves and fools. The Jesuits were for preventing any further examination, but the doctor producing his commission insisted that the girl should declare what was written on the leaf of paper before her, and in what language. The Jesuits then alleged that the characters in which the page was wrote, were diabolical, and refused to let the girl answer or explain.

The doctor in the name of the prince of Piedmont, would admit of no evasion, and would oblige the priests to go through their usual ceremonies. During these the girl was all the time assuming the most frightful looks in her power, which were construed by the priests to be supernatural.

The doctor mimicked her, and acted in a manner still more alarming. Orders were given to answer, and the leaf being laid before the possessed she screeched in a terrible manner, desiring it to be taken away. She said it was Hebrew, and a blasphemous writing against the Holy Ghost.

The prince and nobility of Piedmont approved the doctor, and laughed heartily at the impostor so successfully detected. The two Jesuits were banished, and the girl was soon cured by proper medicine.

I might here introduce many stories told in support of witchcraft, and the influence of witches on other creatures, which might serve, to unprejudiced minds, at least as so many proofs of the absurdity. Let a few more suffice. A woman of Hindostan suspected of witchcraft, raised a rebellion, by circulating a report that at a certain day of the moon she used to cook in the skull of an enemy, a mess consisting of owls, bats, snakes, lizards, human flesh and other ingredients, which distributed among her followers, had a power of rendering them fearless and invisible, and of raising terror in the minds of their enemies!—Stories of Scotch Witches, &c.

Thus, sir, I have endeavored to account for the faith of witchcraft, by tracing it to its fountain, marking its progress, changes, and effects, and likewise for the crime being chiefly imputed to women.—The train of evidences already adduced, the many historical facts, as well as experiment and observation, conspire to prove beyond the least possibility of doubt, (if credit should be given to history, or our own senses,) that witchcraft or the powers ascribed to witches and wizards were not supernatural, but merely art, juggling and deception. It only remains, to prove from the oracles of truth, and the nature of the thing itself; that not only witchcraft, but the powers ascribed to forcerers,

diviners, magic, and magicians, were mere trick and delusion.—The sacred history, as well as the history of the impostors detected in all ages, clearly represent all pretenders to the faculty of bewitching, divining, or foretelling future events, as wicked execrable, impotent wretches. * “Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good or do evil, that we be dismayed, and behold it together.—Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought, an abomination is he that chooseth you.” (1) “Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, when thou shalt not know.” (2) “Stand now with thine enchantments, and, with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast labored from thy youth, if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.” (3) “Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels; Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.” (4) “Behold they shall be as stubble.” (5) “And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that use familiar spirits, and unto wizards, that peep and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead.” (6) “To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (7) “That frustrateth the token of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.” (8) “But they are altogether brutish, and foolish, the stock is a doctrine of vanities.” (9) “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.” (10) “The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish.” I shall make no comment on these plain declarations of scripture, their

* Isa. xli. verses 23. 24.

(1) Isaiah xlvii. 11. (2) 12. (3) 13. (4) 14. (5) chap. viii. 19. (6) 20. (7) xlv. 25. (8) Jerem. x. 8. (9) Jona. ii. 8. (10) Psalm i. 6.

meaning is obvious to the common understanding of every mind open to conviction. I only beg every gentlemen for or against the question, to lay his hand on his heart, and say whether the scripture texts I have here quoted, do not clearly represent all pretenders to witchcraft or supernatural powers, as impotent, foolish, senseless, vain, wicked creatures.—If any man here will affirm that these texts have a different meaning, and that witches and others, ever had and now have a knowledge of future events, further than peculiar penetration, or the appearances of things make probable, or that they have power over the inhabitants of this world and the affairs of it, by means of magic intercourse with, or assistance from demons, devils, or evil spirits; I must henceforward think there is no meaning in words; or that light means darkness; when I read mountain it means valley. Instead of truth I may read falsehood. Instead of weakness I may read power, for enchantment read experiment, for delusion read reality.—But I know there are some passages of holy writ, that seem to favor the belief of witchcraft, and there are many well meaning people (for it is by no means a damnable article of faith whether we believe or disbelieve in witchcraft) who firmly believe there have been witches, who did wonderful things, beyond the power of nature, and give credit to almost all the stories told concerning them: Why? Because they were told so in their infant years, their grandmothers, aunts, and many other good friends were of that opinion. But such people will tell me, not our grandmothers and nurses only, but nations in general, wise and good men too in all ages, had such an opinion! Whoever has been attentive to the facts I have already stated, will not be surprised at this. There has been in all ages and nations, a great body of people, comparatively speaking, weak, illiterate, ignorant and enthusiastic. Add to these, the many who are fond of every thing new, uncommon and marvellous, the opinions of thousands of whom can scarcely be viewed as the shadow of an evidence, far less can it be placed in competition with the testimony of one knowing, honest, and discerning man. It was, and is still easy to impose

on the bulk of men. A magic picture, or a magic lantern could yet deceive thousands, and in the hands of adepts, might be managed so as in a great measure to revive the faith and superior power of magicians and witches at this day. Had Lunardi, or any of the aeronauts arrived in Scotland or some other places some centuries ago, they would have found inflammable air sufficient to send their souls either to heaven or——. Another reason why so many people believe in witchcraft is, because witches, wizards, and magicians, are often mentioned, and their powers seemingly admitted in scripture. (1) "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." (2) "Neither shall ye use enchantments nor observe times; regard not them that have a familiar spirit, neither seek after wizards to be defiled by them.—A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit or a wizard shall surely be put to death.

"Then Pharaoh also called the wise men, and the forcerers; and the magicians did so also with their enchantments."—"And the magicians did so also with their enchantments to bring forth lice, and they could not."—These texts, with the story of the witch of Endor are all the authorities commonly adduced in support of the doctrine of magic and witchcraft. And pray what do they import in their largest sense. Do they express more or less than the wickedness of pretending to supernatural powers, and the weakness and absurdity of such attempts?—As to what Moses says concerning them, it is very common in the writings of ancient and modern historians, to speak of jugglers as doing what they appeared to do, not what they really did. Moses does not affirm that either witches or magicians did any real miracle in conformity to what he performed, only that they imitated him. They did so by their enchantments, which signifies deception or concealment, and would have been as well translated secret flights or juggling. Those people who think that witches being mentioned in scripture, is such a strong proof of their power over other creatures, and of their doing things supernatural, have the same reason for believing in the power and divinity of heathen gods; why? because

(1) Exod. xxii. 18. (2) Lev. xix. 26. 31. chap. xx. 27.

they are mentioned in scripture. We read there of worship paid to them, and that many believed in them. But let me ask these good people, who have such a strong but ill founded faith in the supernatural powers of witches, forcerers, and magicians. Do they duly consider, whence these powers were derived, or on what foundation were they built? were they not built on the belief and power of heathen dieties, Demons, and evil spirits, which it was the design of Moses, the design of his mission, and the design of God to demolish.

With respect to the witch of Endor, there is no proof, that she raised Samuel, or that the spirit of Samuel in his likeness, was raised by any means which she used. The contrary seems much more evident. She was, like all other witches a mere cheat, and dealt in trick and deception. She probably went to use her incantation, but ere she began her juggling she was greatly surprised with a vision of something very different from what she expected.—Heaven seems, to have interposed in that affair, not in compliance with the base means used by the witch, or merely to gratify Saul, but for ends known only to himself, permitted the soul of Samuel or sent a spirit in the likeness of Samuel (for the souls of men are ministring spirits to execute their Father's pleasure) in order to declare an event of great moment, namely, the discomfiture of Saul's army, and the fate of Saul and Jonathan, events unknown to the witch, and even the devil himself. Should it be urged, that from the dispirited state of Saul's army and the courage of the Philistines, the consequence was very probable, and required only common penetration to foresee and foretell it.—

But though the fate of Saul's army was pretty evident, was it not very possible, that Saul and Jonathan might have escaped.—There was no certainty of their death.—Nor could any such event have been foretold with such exactness, but by one to whom God had been pleased to reveal it. It is a thought unworthy to God to suppose, and still worse to affirm, that he communicated the knowledge of the event either to the devil, the witch, or any other familiar spirit, with which the witch was supposed to connive. But why was the witch so greatly surprised, if she had seen no more than usual appearances?

—why so much alarmed by one of her own familiar spirits? why so much afraid even of Saul. Why did she not know it was Saul! till the event discovered him: why afraid of the man that God had deserted as well as herself, why afraid of him at all. If she had the powers of other witches or like those of later times, she might have burst from him like smoke from a tobacco pipe, or in a blaze of fire, or even if she had been tied to a stake could not she have squeezed herself into the size of a hare, a rabbit, a cat or, magpie, and fly for her life. Had her neck been put in a halter, might not she have raised a spirit who could assume her likeness and left it in the halter instead of her own.—These were easy matters, to a witch who could bring a spirit from heaven or hell in the likeness of a saint!—there is another argument not in favor of witches, and which I have often thought should have some weight with people of that class to whom I now speak. viz. that the witches, both antient and modern, were generally poor mean miserable creatures, often in the most pinching and necessitous circumstances. It is natural to think, that if ever there were such human creatures, with supernatural powers, who had power over other creatures, and connived with invisible spirits, they would at least been able to coin money. Did they not so much as know where misers hid their purses, or where treasures were concealed, which accident has frequently discovered. Why did they not make themselves, rich or at least supply their wants from hidden treasures that lay useless in many places up and down the world? these things were not great mysteries for devils, infernal spirits, and witches to know. Or had the prime minister of hell taxed them so high for the support of government, that of all the cash and treasures, known to them and their sovereign they were only allowed a small pittance to keep soul and body together, while he had any business for them in this world.—Thus I have endeavored to expose the absurdity of witchcraft, and to answer the common arguments in support of the power of magicians and witches. I have been as plain and simple, in language and in stating the arguments, as possible, in order to be understood by all present. There is a class

of people, I have not a single doubt but they are now hearing me, with whom I know it is in vain to reason.—Duped by their own opinions, they believe because they believe, and the disbelieve because they disbelieve. Pride will not allow them to own they were mistaken, and they will be far from having as much self denial as to confess that any man, say what he will, has made them wiser to day than they were yesterday, that would be to own, that another man was wiser than them, or at least sooner in the secret.—Reasoning ought only to be exercised on reasonable or rational men, but what has reason to do or what can it do with obstinate, self important, self taught animals. I bewail your situation, but you are highly culpable, you are ignorant, it is true, that is your misfortune ; but you are resolved to continue so, and that is your fault. Blame not witches, blame not wizards, magicians, forcerers, or evil spirits, you are self witched, infatuated, depraved,—you have shut the avenues of your souls against information, and by a habit of thinking, that your opinions are right, your minds are steeled as it were against the arrows of conviction.—Were I in the chair, Sir,—I would say to this class, Persevere, “Be strong in the faith,” you have strong arguments to support you.—Your great, great grand-mothers believed : your nurses told you many stories concerning witches, and perhaps some of your friends suffered in the cause.

The Bible speaks of witches and there must be witches. The Bible speaks of heathen gods, and the worship paid to them, and therefore there were such gods, with all the powers ascribed to them. Herod in scripture is called a fox, therefore Herod was a fox.—Besides it is dangerous to deny the power of witches, our cows and horses might smart for it, we might lose our milk, and a thousand mischiefs might befall us. But further, the belief of witches, and their powers, makes our children afraid to say or to do what is ill, and we wish them to have the same good principles with ourselves. That is, “we would do little for God, if the devil were dead.”

Now, sir, least any man should misunderstand me, and venture to think or say that I have attempted to

invalidate, or that I disbelieve the scripture account of witchcraft, &c. And least any thing I have said in the course of this debate should offend any good mind (as for others I despise their censure, I disregard their calumny) let me tell them, I believe there were witches, and wizards, and witchcraft, as firmly as I believe that there were priests and priestcraft, I believe there were wizards, forcerers, magicians, magic, soothsayers, peepers, mutterers, and lying prophets, and I have as great respect for the scripture authority concerning them, as any man here present. But if I understand what the sacred writings say concerning them, they are represented as weak, vain and wicked impostors. I believe that witches were cheats and imposed on the ignorant; that witchcraft consisted in trick and deception; that magicians, and all the classes I have mentioned were jugglers and deceivers. That they had not faculty either of themselves or by means of evil spirits, to injure mankind or do any thing beyond the power of nature, art, or science. That witchcraft and the actions ascribed to witches were false, delusive, and often self-contradictory, some times pretending to do good by means of evil spirits, and at other times a power of doing evil by good spirits. A crime not only dubious, but impossible, irreconcilable to philosophy, and all that has yet been discovered with respect to the powers of human nature. A scheme that puts the highest affront on human nature, by supposing the offspring of heaven, slaves and drudges of the devil. It is dishonorable to the moral government of God, a thought big with impiety. It supposes the parent of all good, the author of evil, and indirectly conniving with evil spirits—allowing his rational creatures (who were designed fellow workers with their maker, to do him honor, and be useful to one another in this state, as well as enjoy his presence in the life to come) to be the scourges of the devil; instruments in the hands of evil spirits, not to punish the wicked only, but indiscriminately, and for what recompence? For an eternity pregnant with inconceivable misery.—A crime founded on ridiculous stories, and the power of heathen deities and evil spirits, in opposition to God; pretending to reveal not only

what is not revealed, but what the gospel makes impious to search into. That takes the government of actions and events out of the hand of that unbounded goodness, universal wisdom, and uncontrollable power, which holds, and directs the reins of unlimited empire, and subjects us to the power and caprice of the worst of beings, the devil and his emissaries. A crime that loses credit in proportion to our inquiries concerning it. A crime of which no honest discerning man can, or ever hath presumed to produce one particular modern instance, that will bear examination. How weak does the power of witches and evil spirits appear, when we consider that the hairs on our heads are numbered, and that heaven superintends and directs all actions and events. Under the influence of this delightful thought, the faith of witchcraft is entirely demolished, the thing itself appears a wild chimera.

“Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
“I am surrounded still with God.”